



NOTICE OF PREPARATION ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

August 18, 2006

TO: State Clearinghouse
Responsible and Trustee Agencies
Interested Agencies and Parties

FROM: Russian River County Sanitation District
c/o Sonoma County Water Agency
404 Aviation Boulevard
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

IRRIGATION RELIABILITY AND BENEFICIAL REUSE PROJECT

The Russian River County Sanitation District (District) is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Russian River Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Irrigation Reliability and Beneficial Reuse Project (Proposed Project). The Sonoma County Water Agency (Agency), which operates the District's treatment plant under contract, will prepare the EIR on behalf of the District in accordance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA guidelines, and the Agency's "Procedures for the Implementation of CEQA." The District will be the lead agency pursuant to CEQA. All comments from responsible and trustee agencies, property owners, and interested persons and parties regarding the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR will be considered. The following sections provide information regarding project location, background information, project need and objective, project description, and public comment period.

PROJECT LOCATION

The Proposed Project will be developed primarily along county roads in the general vicinity of the District service area and at the District treatment plant (**Figure 1**). The county roads that may be utilized for this project are located in a mixture of unincorporated urban areas, rural residential areas, and agricultural and forest lands in the Russian River Valley and Green Valley areas (**Figure 2**). The District service area covers approximately 2,700 acres and includes the unincorporated areas of Armstrong Park, Rio Nido, Guerneville, Guerneville Park, Vacation Beach, and the Drake Road area. The treatment plant is located outside the community of Guerneville at 18400 Neeley Road. The facility is situated approximately 2,500 feet north of the Russian River and is bordered on the north, east, and south by mixed evergreen forests. The Vacation Beach residential community is located west of the facility.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The District provides service to approximately 3,315 parcels using a gravity sewer system and eleven lift stations, treating wastewater from approximately 2,795 Equivalent Single-Family Dwellings (ESDs). The treatment plant was designed to treat an average daily dry weather flow (ADWF) of 0.71 million gallons per day (MGD). The District is currently permitted to provide tertiary treatment for an ADWF of up to 0.51 MGD and currently treats an ADWF of approximately 0.35 MGD.

The quality and quantity of allowable discharge from the District's WWTP to the Russian River is stipulated by requirements adopted in the Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) Order No. R1-2003-0026, which also serves as the District's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit (No. CA0024058). Current disposal methods include surface water disposal to the Russian River during the discharge season and land application at several irrigation sites during the reclamation season. Order No. R1-2003-0026 and the Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region (Basin Plan) prohibit discharge of reclaimed water to the Russian River or any of its tributaries during the period of May 15 through September 30 of each year. During this period, the District must rely solely on the ability to irrigate the Northwood Golf Club and portions of forest land leased from adjacent property (owned by the Burch family) as the exclusive method of discharging reclaimed water. The reliability of this method is dependent upon several factors, including weather conditions, soil saturation, and in the case of the Northwood Golf Club, the user's ability to utilize the District's reclaimed water.

The NPDES permit limits irrigation (reclamation season) disposal capacity to 0.51 MGD; however, the actual amount of reclaimed water that is recycled through irrigation in any year is dependent on weather conditions, irrigation site conditions, and dry weather wastewater flow. Due to a lack of sufficient irrigation land area for recycling during the reclamation season, the District periodically struggles to properly recycle the current ADWF of 0.35 MGD on its existing irrigation sites under certain conditions, and cannot reliably recycle water at the treatment plant design capacity of 0.71 MGD ADWF. In addition, the District has been overly reliant on the Burch Property to offset reduced application rates at Northwood Golf Club.

Several storm events in May 1996 significantly increased dry season influent. Although the District had adequate treatment capacity at the facility, it lacked sufficient irrigation options to appropriately recycle the water entering the treatment plant. The District, therefore, had to irrigate under unfavorable weather and saturated soil conditions. Runoff from the leased irrigation areas resulted in the discharge of 201,000 gallons of tertiary treated effluent to the Russian River on May 21, 1996. As a result, Cease and Desist Order (CDO) No. 97-9 was issued by the RWQCB on January 23, 1997. CDO No. 97-9 was subsequently rescinded and replaced by CDO No. 97-76 on August 27, 1997. CDO No. 97-76 required the District to prepare a long-term solutions report to prevent discharging waste contrary to Waste Discharge Requirements. The long-term solutions recommended facility upgrades that included additional irrigation options.

The Occidental County Sanitation District (Occidental) and Camp Meeker Recreation and Park District (Camp Meeker) have been pursuing solutions to their own wastewater collection, treatment, storage, and disposal issues for many years. Occidental is required to comply with Regional Board CDOs in response to discharge violations. Camp Meeker is currently under a building moratorium and considered a Prohibition of Waiver Zone due to numerous septic system failures in the community. Occidental and Camp Meeker are developing an agreement to pursue a project to connect to the District's WWTP for treatment and disposal services and Camp Meeker is pursuing development of environmental compliance documents that would analyze the impacts of connecting Camp Meeker and Occidental to the District's WWTP.

Each community/entity would need to analyze the potential environmental impacts of their respective project to connect to the District treatment plant in accordance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA guidelines.

PROJECT NEED AND OBJECTIVE

The Proposed Project is needed to reduce the possibility of reclamation season discharge violations at the WWTP, satisfy the long-term solution as required by CDO No. 97-76, and provide additional flexibility to reliably accommodate the treatment and disposal needs of the District. The District has identified approximately 2,200 acres of rural and agricultural lands within the Russian River Valley and Green Valley areas that could potentially use recycled water.

The primary objective of the project is to provide the District with the flexibility to reliably accommodate periods of exceptional rainfall during the reclamation season, provide disposal options that allow operation of the treatment plant at its reclamation season design capacity of 0.71 MGD ADWF, and provide recycled water as a beneficial reuse to willing landowners.

Adding irrigation capacity to meet the treatment plant design capacity of 0.71 MGD ADWF could also allow the District to reliably treat and dispose of Occidental's and Camp Meeker's wastewater should those communities choose to pursue connection to the District's facilities to solve their respective sanitation, public health, and water quality issues.

The District is currently utilizing the maximum amount of irrigation disposal capacity available through the District's existing agreements. By locating willing landowners and providing them with recycled water, current reclamation season reliability and flexibility would improve, over reliance on the Burch Property would be reduced, and redundancy would be added to the system during process upset conditions.

The project would also assist the District in making recycled water available for beneficial reuse. The benefits of reuse include a reduction of groundwater pumping that may be creating stressed aquifer conditions in some areas. The replacement of groundwater pumping with recycled water in key agricultural areas, such as Green Valley, would contribute to the recovery of local groundwater supplies, which could enhance streamflows in adjacent streams that support steelhead and coho salmon. Enhanced streamflows could also contribute to improving habitat conditions for the recovery of salmonids and other aquatic organisms that inhabit the Russian River watershed.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Proposed Project would provide a flexible and reliable recycled water distribution system serving water users in the Russian River Valley and Green Valley areas. The Proposed Project would consist of the construction, operation, and maintenance of recycled water pipelines; booster pump stations; storage tanks; associated appurtenances; and possibly energy recovery stations. As part of the project, the District would need to acquire access easements or purchase property adjacent to the pipeline route for the construction, operation and maintenance of various project components. The Proposed Project would also provide turnouts along pipelines for property owners to connect into the recycled water system.

The proposed recycled water pipelines would be placed primarily within existing public road right-of-ways and would distribute recycled water from the District treatment plant to portions of the Russian River Valley or Green Valley areas. The distribution system would provide recycled water to willing landowners, including rural and agricultural lands such as vineyards and orchards, to offset groundwater pumping for irrigation purposes.

The District is currently considering two proposed alternative pipeline routes to provide increased operational flexibility and reliability to the current recycled water distribution system: Alternative 1, which consists of approximately 15 miles of 8 to 14-inch pipeline and appurtenances in the Green Valley area, and Alternative 2 which consists of approximately 18 miles of 8 to 14-inch pipeline and appurtenances in the Russian River Valley area. Booster pumps would be added to the system as necessary, and could include upgrading the existing pumps at the WWTP and adding a remote booster station along the pipeline route. Booster pump stations would be used to maintain sufficient water pressure to transport recycled water through the distribution system.

Depending on the route, storage tanks would be used to sustain pressure in the recycled water distribution system, add operational storage capacity, and assist in meeting peak water demands. Storage tanks with a total storage of up to 1,000,000 gallons may be located at one or more system high points, to provide system storage to meet normally expected daily demands without the need for pumping during peak energy usage hours. Pumping during peak energy usage times increases the operating costs of the booster pumps and will be minimized by the use of appropriately sized tanks. The project may utilize existing off-stream storage reservoirs, which would also improve operational flexibility and reliability of the recycled water distribution system. Although locations of storage tanks and off-stream reservoirs have not yet been identified, generally they would be located in the general vicinity of the pipeline.

Energy recovery stations may be utilized in areas of high head, sufficient flow, and readily available power distribution infrastructure. Energy recovery stations would typically consist of a short section of bypass piping where recycled water would be supplied to a turbine generator that would generate power for sale to PG&E. The energy recovery stations would generally consist of a turbine generator mounted on a concrete slab, and enclosed in a small building with associated connecting pipelines and other appurtenances.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE EIR

In accordance with CEQA, the EIR will address the potential environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Project. Specific areas of analysis will include: Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation and Traffic, and Utilities and Service Systems. The EIR will also analyze potential cumulative impacts related to the Proposed Project. Areas of analysis may be changed based on input received during the NOP review period. Mitigation measures will be proposed to avoid or reduce such impacts, where reasonably feasible.

The EIR will discuss alternatives to the Proposed Project and alternatives may be added based on input from the public and regulatory agencies during the NOP review period. Decision-makers, responsible and trustee agencies under CEQA, property owners, and interested persons and parties will also have an opportunity to comment on the EIR after it is published and circulated for public review.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR THIS NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response to this NOP must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 45 days after receipt of this notice. The public comment period for the NOP will close at 5:00 p.m.

on **October 6, 2006**. Please include a name, address, and telephone number of a contact person in your agency for all future correspondence on this subject. Please send your comments to:

**Russian River County Sanitation District
c/o Sonoma County Water Agency
Attn: Jeff Church, Senior Environmental Specialist
PO Box 11628
Santa Rosa, CA 95406-1628**

You may also submit comments electronically at the Agency's website:

www.sonomacountywater.org

OPEN HOUSE SCOPING MEETING

In order for the public and regulatory agencies to have an opportunity to ask questions and submit comments on the scope of the Irrigation Reliability and Beneficial Reuse Project EIR, a Scoping Meeting will be held during the NOP review period. The Scoping Meeting will use an Open House format. Agency staff will be available to answer questions and provide information about the project, but a formal presentation will not be made in order to allow interested parties to participate at anytime during the Open House. Written comment forms will be supplied for those who wish to submit written comments at the scoping meeting; written comments may also be submitted any time during the NOP review period. The date, time, and location of the Scoping Meeting are listed below:

**Wednesday, September 6, 2006
4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
Guerneville Veterans Memorial Hall
1st and Church Streets, Guerneville
Main Auditorium**

Documents or files related to the Irrigation Reliability and Beneficial Reuse Project are available for review at the Agency's Administrative Office located at 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, California, 95403.

If you have any questions, or if you wish to update your information on our mailing list, please contact Jeff Church, Senior Environmental Specialist, at (707) 547-1949.